



THE APPRECIATION OF
FOOTBALL

By the same Author:

FOOTBALL: FACTS AND FANCIES, OR
THE ART OF SPECTATORSHIP (1866)

THE APPRECIATION OF FOOTBALL

BY

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'But I don't see what football has got to do with being mayor.' She endeavoured to look like a serious politician.

'You are nothing but a cuckoo,' Denry pleasantly informed her. 'Football has got to do with everything.'—*The Card*, Arnold Bennett.

FOREWORD

I AM DELIGHTED to write a brief foreword to this book because, apart from being such good fun, it helps to span a gap far too long unbridged. One of the penalties of this age of intensive specialisation is the division between sport and culture. Cricket is better served, for its ties with the Arts are close and well understood, but Association football seems, with few exceptions, to have been shunned by the essayist, the artist and the poet. But, is the more self-consciously sensitive mind which appreciates, shall we say, Blake and Bartók, really so far removed from the man on the terraces who delights to savour the artistry of Matthews and Mortensen?

Dr Percy Young demonstrates that the mature mind, the man in love with life, the humanist, needs to be nourished by both worlds. By clothing the facts and figures of football in such charming raiment, he makes a most delectable companion to take along with you on Saturday afternoons. I am sure that everyone who read his first book on foot-

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ball will like this one equally well—and I hope that many others will, like me, fall helplessly under his spell.

Stanley Rous
Secretary, FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION

13th June 1951

APOLOGY

I AM COMPELLED to write this book. It is true that others have similarly protested at the onset of literary labour—hoping, as I do not, for the safe delivery of a masterpiece: but the compulsion in my case is from without rather than from within and, indeed, may entertainingly be shown in detail. Make no mistake; I write not because I tell myself I must but because others tell me I must.

I am accustomed to others in the football world—this apparent immodesty will soon appear at least as based on fact—having their ‘fans’. But that I should have more on account of my tenuous sporting connections than my artist’s profession surprises me; though, perhaps, it shouldn’t. To be quite balanced in the matter I should confess that once—only once—a boy for whose signature Everton and West Bromwich Albion were said to be competing, asked for mine. Reginald Dixon and Reginald Foort had left a little space on the page of an autograph album and I was the only person to be found with an unusual capacity for both playing the organ and writing my name very small. That, until lately,

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was my one 'fan'; obscure and fickle, but with an album in which my name, flanked with Reginalds, illegibly faced the bold flourishes of eleven heroes from Manchester City. It was the third Manchester City team to finish third in the First Division¹.

'Fans', I learn from my friend (if I may say so) Mr Wright can be noisome and their rhapsodic correspondence an eternal imposition. Therefore I rest content with four. They are, qualified by long spectatorship, as follows: my butcher's principal assistant; my aged schoolmaster (a Chip of an old and familiar block); my Scottish friend disguised in an earlier work² as Dickson McCunn; and the gentleman who until he recognized my proper quality used to expel me from half-empty buses, but now greets me at rush hour with a 'Squeeze up inside can't you there's plenty of room for one more. You'll be at the match today/tomorrow/Saturday, sir . . .'. That 'sir' I appreciate.

My four friends, who separately command me, immediately represent that breadth in comradeship which is British football; and their unified interest in and approval of my own whimsicalities convinces me that the poetry of the game means more to the devout than they mostly care to say. (On the eve of Aston Villa v Wolves it needs all one's resources of poetry to protect sanity.)

¹ You are invited to test your general knowledge (if any) and state the year. The answer is on page 93.

² *Football Facts and Fancies*, see page 78.

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Let none say that butchering is soulless. After the defeat of his team in a replayed cup-tie at Blackpool, by Blackpool, and for Blackpool, Alf disjointed aged carcasses with a fevered frenzy that was terrible. A snow-covered ground, a couple of casualties, a fortuitous goal, a second half in which eleven Lancastrians (by adoption) stood in permanent wedge across the goalmouth gave him, as he said, no appetite for work. It was not until his team looked, at the season's end, possible league champions that sausage-buying became, relatively, a pleasure. With Alf I enjoy, from time to time, a mid-week, but only a mid-week, chat. The end of Saturday morning is conversationally useless and any housewife who protests of off-handed treatment at that time should be reminded that single-mindedness then concerns team-changes, referees, the climate in relation to its likely effect on the home forward-line or the visiting defence—or *vice versa*, rather than the Minister of Food, the Argentine Government, the size, quality, and age of the meat ration. In any case the latter topics are best obliterated from thought. As I write Webb is on trial in the House, we on short commons, and there are no reserves.

It will be recognized that Alf is one type of spectator. My schoolmaster is of another order. A Welshman, a historian, a neat writer of scholarly essays, something of a soccer man in the past and now, by environment, a student of Rugby football,

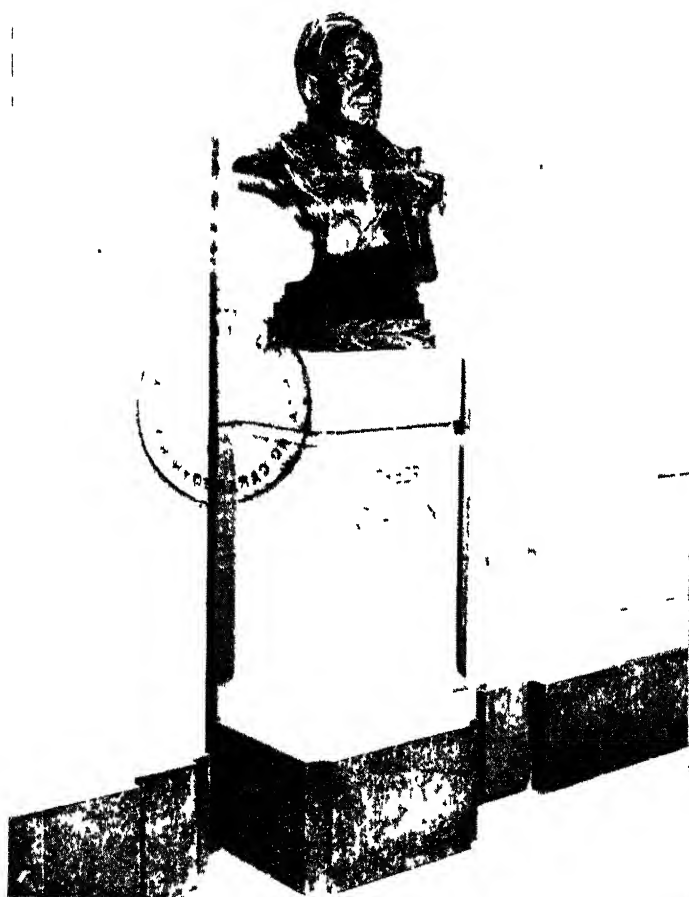
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he wrote the other day applauding the fine detail of Alan Clarke's commentaries on football matters in the north of England. Here, where least suspected, was one whose enthusiasm for style had led him to an affection for broadcast commentaries on distant Middlesbrough (for where can style be better understood), or Hull City, or Huddersfield Town. Write, he said to me, another book about football.

My Scot, who lives in Edinburgh, happy in the present state of Hibernians—ahead of all Glasgow and one point behind Dundee but with four matches fewer played—sends me, in token of matches we have seen together, a box of shortbread composed within earshot of Tynecastle. The least I can do is to repay his shortbread, as he suggests, with my pen.

Once it was joy to watch intermittent spasms of forward passing from the tops of trams. Now, in general, it must be from buses. My bus conductor, when on duty on Saturday afternoons, assures me that continual to-and-froing past our ground gives him an entirely new approach to football. At 2.30 he has one vision, at 2.50 another. And so the afternoon passes in a sequence of snapshots—perhaps in more senses than one. He recognizes, so he implies, the beauty of the fragile incident. His mind sees many developments from that incident.

It is in such mental activity and imaginative fertility that much of the deepest pleasure of artistic appreciation lies. On hearing the statement of a



COMMEMORATIVE BUST AT ARSENAL STADIUM



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fugue subject we anticipate possible consequences, or in reading Margery Allingham, give Albert Campion independent instructions. The way of our imagination is almost certainly not that of the composer or the author; that matters little for we have gone out with them some part of the creative way. In football, as is abundantly clear, we have our own ideas. Usually (alas!) they do not coincide with those of our team. We, perhaps, would have scored. Occasionally, however, there is the divine satisfaction of proving Mr Dunne's theory of time at least probable. There will be a goal, we say. Platt (for Swindin) has the ball. To Barnes, we think, then quickly forward to Compton. An opening for Lishman. One minute later, exact in each detail, it happens. I know. It happened like that a month back, and I didn't want it so.

The point to be made here is that, although he can see rather few matches, the bus conductor (whose real compensation is to study such footballers as are compelled to entrust their valuable bodies to his safe keeping) knows how to enjoy the occasional moment.

The small man behind a large crowd now knows what to do, as also low-flying pilots and casual engine drivers.

Engine drivers deserve some special commemoration here. There are two to whom I am especially grateful. There was the one who drove us to Crewe for the Final of the Cheshire Senior Cup and, dis-

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covering the objective of our journey, took us on the footplate to discuss the afternoon's prospects and to demonstrate the mysteries of his own art. There was the other who, during a lesser league match, distracted my son's attention from a monotonous progress of sponge-carrying trainers and a goal-less draw, by pushing his modest 0-6-0 tank engine across an adjacent viaduct and back again for the greater part of the afternoon.

Of a third driver I have less generous recollections, for he halted a Penzance-Bristol express for half an hour not more than a hundred yards past some contest in which Dawlish (Rangers, Rovers, United?) were grimly engaged. And after that Football Editions were out of print at Exeter, at Taunton, at Bristol: that on a day when the Second Round of the F.A. Cup took place was more than could easily be borne.

Maybe it was as well as things turned out. For our natives lost their chance of brief fame by losing to a team—once of wider renown³—from the Lancashire Combination. I saw two eye-witnesses shortly afterwards. Said one, 'We had all the play. We should have won by five or six. But for their goalkeeper'; the other—to be truthful a loyal supporter of our other home team—'What's the goalkeeper

³ Winners of the Third Division (North) Championship in the season 1922-23, but out of Division II in a year. Who were they? For the moment turn a blind eye to page 93 where the answer is.

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for, anyway?' An observation of some profundity, so long as the acidity of its original expression can be forgotten.

Were this a football annual (which, in fact, it seems it is) a list of occasions would leave no room for that comment for which I am asked. Besides there are other informed publications which fulfil the statistical purpose. Neither have I the intrepidity of the true cataloguist. (I do, however, applaud such a masterpiece of compressed energy as the *F.A. Year Book*.)

But I have my year's principal memories which being private may provoke attention by their quiddity.

Miss Sackville West's study of *Nursery Rhymes*, one of the year's publications, struck me as lacking at one point, for our local repertoire includes a new theme, which serves to show in some part the reason for permanence of the old.

As I was walking through the street,
Wondering what there was to eat,
A football hit me in the eye.
That was a shot from Jesse Pye!

Having heard that, or some variation, approximately three hundred times, I am obliged to count it as a principal recollection and also to note that familiarity with the great begins even earlier than, from my own past, I thought it did. Pensively I began to propose that this rhyme had its honourable

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ancestors. The Knave of Hearts—how could it be otherwise than that a Hibernian started that scandal. Horner in the Corner clearly referred obliquely to one who formerly played for Ballymena United and Ireland. He was an amateur, otherwise he could have had no Christmas pie. And Thyne (who put the cat in) for Darlington and Scotland. But from fancy I return you to what may not appear to be, but is, fact.

For there was the Irish Alliance match played, literally, uphill and down dale. It began half an hour late and we watched from a bank whereon the wild thyme may have been but the prickly whin certainly was. There was in the absolute sense no referee, for none came. His place was taken by the visitors' manager-trainer-linesman-secretary. His capacity for the task was amply displayed by the firmness with which he rejected the home supporters' unanimity that five minutes too few had been played. He had by then achieved an honourable draw and clearly was wise to leave matters as they stood, for he had to anticipate a long journey home with his team, and across wild country. That shilling invested was, I thought, towards amateur dramatics.

There was the Toper's Pavilion in the south-west corner of the Crewe ground. Unique I think. On this ground an enormous crowd, at the Cheshire Cup Final, roared in greater exhilaration because of frequent competition from rampageous expresses.

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Afterwards we became acquainted with the trophy, in the hotel, and a few bubbles were still left winking, though some long way below the brim.

There was Matthews *triumphans* at Highbury a day or two after the University Rugby match at Twickenham; the sprightly Jugo-Slavs with their Tchaikowsky; the Austrians who, aided by Wagner, defeated Scotland; great deeds by Third Division sides. And that immortal sentence uttered by a Cumbrian in attendance on Carlisle in London:

'We shall muffle their guns and tell our sons how Carlisle made the Gunners fall.'

But by this time I had achieved more than all these heroes. I had broadcast in Sports Parade: I had spoken to Glendenning: I had seen the commentators,

They galloped, they galloped, they galloped all three,
From Stoke, and from Leicester and gallant Derby,⁴

bear hot news to the microphone: I had, as a spectator, spoken. That, however, is not the point. What is important is that my fans considered that they were represented not improperly. Or so they said. Therefore I feel emboldened to take up where I left off a year ago, noting that fidelity to the art of spectatorship nearly brought me to a premature end. For on a December day I stood entranced by the

⁴ Emotion provoked by Derby's draw with Tottenham and not Browning is responsible for something of a sprain in the rhyme.

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nimble Hancocks, who scored three times on that day, neither knowing nor caring that

Snow wind-whipt to ice
was the herald of an influenza.

But I have recovered and am back on the terracing; digging fervent heels into its gravelled surface; reading my programme before the match and a sentence or two of Somerset Maugham at half-time; barracking with good nature our secretary's prelude broadcast wisecracks; studious in believing the best of our own and the worst, without overmuch malice, of the others; reserving judgement here, rashly delivering it there; now contumacious to a referee's decision, now sure in joyful approval: but at all times whimsical in turning actual defeat into ideal victory (just as the Englishmen will have England victors at Brisbane and Melbourne in spite of the cold, figured tally of the scoreboard) on the grounds that what matters in the long run is the style of the performance.

After all, a final score is a fact and a fact is a dull thing, whereas a movement by Finney, or Langton, or Medley, or Bailey is, often enough, an end in itself. That, says the true spectator, is enough: I have had my money's worth. Not long ago a free kick was given against Chelsea. From thirty or forty yards out (a distance of two continents' span to the intending goal scorer) our outside-right, ablaze with righteous anger but, saving the paradox, ice-cool,

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took aim. The parabola of the flying ball drew itself with swift certainty over a blue line of defence to dissolve into ecstasy within the goal. That, now, is my touchstone of accuracy.

Having arrived at the goal we may begin our study.

TO KEEP THE GOAL

I HAVE ALWAYS taken it hardly—as a God-save-the-King patriot who is prepared to sacrifice sleep to reach a distant football match, to hear the condition of English cricketers on Australian evenings or (when they were) British boxers disputing world championships in America—that Dr Vaughan Williams, who, too, is a patriot, did not set the footballing stanzas from the twenty-seventh of A. E. Housman's *Shropshire Lad* sequence. It is possible, of course, that he considered football in Shropshire as of so doubtful quality that no useful purpose could be served in setting it to music. But now, with Shrewsbury Town in the Third Division (just) the case is altered. Therefore we may examine Housman.

Is football playing
Along the river shore,
With lads to chase the leather,
Now I stand up no more?
Ay, the ball is flying,
The lads play heart and soul;
The goal stands up, the keeper
Stands up to keep the goal.

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These verses have escaped the pertinacious criticism of poetry which has now replaced the writing of poetry. However they do not escape the true critic of poetry (who rarely reads it, but feels it none-the-less)—the football spectator. He is bound to observe that Housman has plagiarized the principal line of the first verse while inventing the second from recollections that have proved inaccurate.

What poet would ever have his lads 'to chase the leather'?

The phrase occurred in the *Newport Advertiser*⁵ of 3rd November, 1895 (I haven't looked but I am certain that it did, as it has occurred, weekly, in provincial journals everywhere for the most of a hundred years). The 'flying ball' is too casual and reflects unfairly on the manner of play. Cowper, it is true, used the same phrase but it may be argued that in 1747 science had not so far progressed as to indicate the advantages of communication by ground passing. The least accurate part of this unhappy account, however, concerns the goalkeeper. (We will let pass the standing goal, merely asking what there would be to keep were the goal not standing.)

Almost the only action not essential to a goal-

⁵ For the greater convenience of scholars, the entire title of this Journal (surely a record in comprehension) is the *Newport & Market Drayton Advertiser and Shropshire, Staffordshire and Cheshire Chronicle (Stone & Eccleshall Advertiser, & Shifnal, Oakengates, Iron Bridge & Madeley Advertiser Incorporated)*.

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keeper in the discharge of his duties is standing. He walks on cold days when play is distant, or on milder occasions leans against an upright—though not perhaps in the highest class; he runs, he leaps, he dives, he bends, he stretches, he falls. In the latter case, when wounded, only can it be said that he cannot do what, in fact, he never has to do: to stand.

But there is this to be said in favour of Housman, for criticism should be objective. His picture, awry in detail, is generously correct in climax. For of all long-living memories those concerning goalkeepers are the longest⁶.

The reason, of course, is that a team has one goalkeeper—unless at the bottom of the League,

⁶ I notice that a little-known variant of Housman's stanzas, with two additional to complete an episode, is clearly more perceptive in detail though climactically less absolute. Thus, after verse 1, we read in *Soc. Slop. Misc. et Var.* (XXXIX, 20—1)

Ay, the centre's shooting,
He's shooting as a star,
But Swift the agile keeper
Fists danger o'er the bar.

And does the corner follow,
As corners long ago,
With eager heads uplifted
And one more goal to show?

True the ball is flying,
Inswinging from the right;
The back is there, however,
And kicks it out of sight.

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when both full-backs and probably the centre-half assist manually until the practice becomes so expensive in penalties and free kicks that the manager signals from the grandstand to let goals come through in the normal way. The uniqueness of the goalkeeper is emphasized by his costume and his sobriety in this respect unconsciously calls the eye to his smallest gesture amid some polychromatic rout in the mud. So concerned was a fellow spectator the other day that, as we peered through the back net, he was able to be heard and understood by his goalkeeper. 'Keep your pants clean, Arthur,' he called. And Arthur did. The influence of the one voice among thirty thousand is perhaps underestimated.

It should be said that formerly goalkeepers dressed as their team mates in their team colours, with perhaps a cloth cap added. I have before me a picture of Linacre, once of Nottingham Forest and England, looking, perhaps, a little forlorn and very cold for the lack of a fisherman's jersey.

It is significant that very few teams appear to have bad goalkeepers. The standard is remarkable. The reason is clear. The goalkeeper is an individual and is allowed his individuality, even to the extent of remaining unnumbered. Small boys, who have, however, large egos, want to become goalkeepers. In that calling they may shine in unshared glory (they are, too, allowed to kick the ball farther than

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anyone else) and order their team mates. They may also go home from school with dirty hands and impunity. I asked the other day, 'What are you going to be when you grow up?'

'A goalkeeper or a referee.'

I understand that at present, aged 7, my catechumen performs both functions simultaneously; at least to his own satisfaction.

The fact that small boys take to goalkeeping in large numbers (again it may be recalled that two boys can play football provided that there is a goalkeeper and he, of the two, is the more important) allows the best to specialize early. Love for the craft then obliterates other considerations and the goalkeeper stays permanently in that office. There is one remarkable exception to this custom—Cowan, the Morton and Scottish player, began his career as a centre-forward.

As we study the contemporary, or near-contemporary scene, we become conscious of Abraham Lincoln's 'adherence to the old and tried, against the new and untried'. I forget when Swift started to play for Manchester City. After many years he retired. And after that played again. And then retired again. No doubt after the passage of more time he will come again; but it will be after much more time, for Trautmann would appear not only to be an eminent successor, but also destined for long residence in Manchester. With much ceremony, the other day, Alf Wood was conducted

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honourably from Roker Park by the Sunderland centre-forward. Wood has been with Coventry for 17 years. Sagar has played for Everton for ever and had I not been aware of Sidlow's antecedents I should have said the same in respect of him and Liverpool. I opened the newspaper—that is to say I turned the newspaper over—one day. Herod was reported injured and Wilkinson—Wilkinson whose toothache set all our canines, incisors and molars in sympathetic vibration more than a decade ago—was back in Stoke's side. All I could do was to repeat Virgil: *O pius pater Aeneas*.

I came out of George Pope's admirable shop in Chesterfield with a couple of cricket bats. I was with an acquaintance. We passed a citizen distinguished in appearance. My colleague raised his hat with 'Good morning, sir.' He answered my look. 'Mr Middleton', he explained and knew that I needed no more information. The Chesterfield goalkeeper, whom often enough I have seen in high competence; but also a Justice of the Peace, a local preacher, one of influence in all branches of citizenship.

Dignity, that dignity which used to distinguish Walter Hammond, belongs in football to the great goalkeepers. I have an essay by me signed by one of the older masters—J. W. Robinson, who played for Derby, and New Brighton Tower, and Southampton. His ghost surpasses those who mince the biographies of our contemporary players, for he has a sense of propriety in style. Mr Robinson is allowed

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a Latin quotation, a reference to Paderewski, and some rotundities of utterance fathered by Macaulay. He has one decorous anecdote.

'Mr Smith,' said Robinson to that illustrious player G. O. Smith, 'I'd sooner keep goal against his Satanic Majesty than against you.'

'And I,' replied Smith, making the score one all, 'would sooner shoot against that gentleman in goal than against you.'

Milton, whose opinion of Satan was more often than not respectful, had him, I feel sure, in goal—after all, Cambridge was a football-playing place in Milton's day—when

he above the rest
In shape and gesture proudly eminent
Stood like a Tower.

If not an irreverent parallel so Swift, so Bartram, so Sagar, so Ditchburn.

In high office dignity is often accompanied by solitude—which may explain why goalkeepers—Lindberg of Sweden or Scott of Wolves—are policemen. A goalkeeper may be very lonely. Watch him change ends after his team has rehearsed at one, but been called by the toss to defend the other. Watch him as he leaves the battlefield long after his colleagues. Consider the Wembley case of Lewis who juggled the ball across his own goal-line, to the mortification of Cardiff and all Wales and to the great advantage of Arsenal. On a foggy day at the

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Den see Hinton⁷ alone with his thoughts and the few spectators within the zone of visibility. Or, cut off from his fellows by the manœuvres of the opposition, him who has to retrieve the ball from the back of the net time after time. The goalkeeper of one Scottish team must have realized this: Bon Accord were defeated in the Scottish Cup, in 1885, by Arbroath, by 36 goals to nil. Recently, I rashly stated, in public, that too few goals were scored at the present time. I begin to see that it is possible to have too much of a good thing.

There are two goalkeepers, held in high affection both at home and away from home, whose appearance demonstrates invariably that generosity is a quality not unknown among British spectators. They are Ugolini of Middlesbrough and Trautmann of Manchester City. Their presence among us is artistically and morally valuable, for both are gifted with courage, quickness of perception, persistence in adversity. For insular prejudices against the countries of their respective origin dissolve before the spectacle of their gamesmanship. They are, though they know it not, ambassadors whose influence is powerful though subtle. It is high time that the Dynamos sent their Alexis Khomich through the Iron Curtain.

To be truthful, foreign goalkeepers are generally respected, for they have in a high degree a dramatic

⁷ English, Irish, Scotch International? Answer on page 93.

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background which enables them to satisfy the deep-seated feeling for colour which an English environment so often denies to its natives. An English goalkeeper dislikes turning easy saves into ones of apparent difficulty (there is danger in the practice), but one such as Moro of Italy cannot resist the pleasures of the histrionic.

Beara of Yugoslavia is as a daring young man on a flying trapeze, but without the trapeze. A consummate ballet dancer. It will be remembered that before the match against England, in which he took such a spectacular part at Highbury, the Press photographers had him in flight for hours on end, to obtain, so they said, pictures for the papers. Ulterior motives might naughtily be suggested, for when each flight ended, the willing goalkeeper would descend suddenly and knee-dangerously to the hard earth.

It is foolish to think that the English spectator cares very much about the results of International matches against Europeans. The intensity of nerve strain is at its greatest when the two teams which are nearest meet. England v Scotland, it is true, is an occasion for elation or subjection of the spirit; but Rangers and Celtic one which means life or death. Therefore the Swiss, the Dutch, the French, the Austrians, the Italians may come and are welcome. They show us not so much football as a game of somewhat similar intention. And their goalkeepers supply an opportunity for indulging our rapturous



'MARCHING ORDERS' FROM WILLIAM PICKFORD'S BOOK OF CUTTINGS



'HAMMERS v TROTTERS' FROM THE ORIGINAL IN TUT-
ANKH-AMEN'S TOMB, B.C 1301

fancies. Similarly we march off to enjoy Albeniz, or Rimsky-Korsakov or Dvorák.

Our English goalkeeper is something of an intellectual. Thus he tempers his artistry, which may, as in the case of Williams, be supreme, with mathematical, meteorological and psychological learning. He bisects angles so as to perplex some rampant forward or to deflect rising balls over the crossbar, senses what effect wind or rain may have on a corner kick; saves penalties because he knows, before their execution, their probable direction.

Mr Robinson, in all modesty, confessed: 'I would far rather keep goal than try to explain in writing how to do it.' He may have done, but he chose the harder alternative. Many can write, but few can excel in goalkeeping.

A STRONG DEFENCE

I KNEW HIM LONG before I knew that he had been, many years before my birth, a full-back. My affection for full-backs was, therefore, very nearly inborn. I knew him as a bass singer in the church choir. He was sturdy, almost as broad as long, fresh of complexion, tousle-headed, with a strongly fashioned jaw. He had clear, blue, honest eyes. He walked with something akin to a sailor's walk; not, however, because he had been at sea but because a damaged cartilage remained from early football injury as a hindrance to steady gait. He had humour but was economic in its expression. His face wore a perpetual shade of beneficence. He was, by trade, a joiner and a craftsman, a bachelor who lived with his sister.

He was one full-back, his brother another. The brother I never knew, but I understand he had a similar character and a similar, soundly balanced, outlook on life.

I must be forgiven if, with George S—— as prototype, I see all full-backs in the light of early experience.

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He was, as I have said, a bass singer and I have always assumed that full-backs should be bass singers and that bass singers should be full-backs. It is, I think, a fact that bass singers in the British Isles tend to sing with what might be mistaken for a full-back technique. When next you hear *Elijah* regard the portraiture of the prophet from this point of view, or when your choral society 'does' *Messiah* notice with what exuberance the basses accomplish sliding tackles, how they engage in head-on collision, how they shout 'Hallelujah' and kick for touch. Tenor singers are a different proposition. They are forwards (indeed one of our leading tenor singers may be urged in the green room to recount his experiences as outside-right for a London bank team in which once he played), or they are, like Jack Davies who bowled Bradman first ball in the afternoon and came to rehearse Bach in the evening, cricketers and three-quarters.

Full-backs are bred to determination and formerly to destruction. The old full-back stopped movements. The modern full-back of eminence, a Beattie, a Hapgood, an Aston, a Scott, is built more constructively and not only stops but also starts action. But old traditions linger and spectators who are slow to keep abreast of modern thought sometimes incline to the opinion that the first activity is also the last. They expect patent opposition, grimness, even anger and disputation from full-backs—though of these latter they may disapprove. Therefore the

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profession of full-back is under a cloud. Full-backs do not frequently become the subjects of autobiographies (though if any full-back would care to have his done I will, for old acquaintance sake, do it for him), cigarette cards, startling transfer negotiations. Towns and cities are not whipped to discontent because of the grievances of full-backs. They are unspectacular and combined in history into an anonymity which never befalls even the least of centre-forwards.

Perhaps, in Valhalla, there is a fraternity of full-backs. They are men who stay together; or maybe I am misled because of the brotherhood of my first known pair, or (Scottish readers, please note) the omnipotence of David and Jack Shaw; or the Corinthian and English association of A. M. and P. M. Walters.

It is noticeable, too, how they are named for the part, how the two full-backs of almost any club maintain a balanced gravity. Normally the surname of one full-back is spondaic in construction, while that of the other tolls monosyllabically.

Tom Short must have been a full-back. He played (club unnamed, but some forerunner of Arsenal?) in 1711 and has a longer reputation than most footballers for he is perpetually crossing the researches of eighteenth century scholars. Addison had him named in the *Spectator* and, as Addison was a discerning critic, I take it that his excellence was absolute. It was agreed by the spectators as well as

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the *Spectator* 'that it was impossible that he should remain a bachelor until the next wake.'

Short is the ideal name for a full-back; onomatopœic indeed in this setting. His ideal companion? Clearly Long^s.

Mutations on full-back nomenclature is fascinating. The assonance of Short and Long is excellent, as is the alliteration of Binks and Banks. I pick up that journal of all journals (delivered to me weekly by a vacational fellow spectator)—*Ireland's Saturday Night*—and appreciate at once the potency of Greer and Hooks. What a defence! The mere recitation of their names strikes terror. Thus it is that we have honourable mention in folk-song of the star(s) of the County Down, who lived in Banbridge Town (Irish Intermediate League)—by which are intended the said Greer and Hooks.

The disadvantage of two monosyllabic full-backs lies in a lack of speed. On the side of æsthetics it does seem to me that one bisyllable and one monosyllable is ideal, for the latter conveys amply to the unconscious or subconscious (according to your psychological affinities) the sheet-anchor function, which is proper to the industrious full-back. Despite the fact that Pipes had a wooden leg (which idiosyncrasy has sometimes unfairly been attached to some of our more inelegant and elderly function-

^s W. Shortt (Plymouth Argyle), Welsh International, 1946-47, and H. Long (Clyde), Scotland, 1947, alas defeat my theorizing, for they were not full-backs!

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aries in the lesser Midland teams) I proffer as an ideal sounding combination Hatchway and Pipes. Which, coming from the fertile genius of a Scottish author, is right. But out of Wilkie Collins, Clyde and Hartwright would do well. How much happier are these fundamental, defensive rhythms than, say, Dickens' Wegg and Riderhood (though Wegg alone is excellent) or Veneering and Wilfer.*

Digression would be unpardonable were it not for the fact that truth outvies fiction. For do I not discover the immortal Pickwick at right-half for Norwich City, and, once there was a Bach (P.) (in 1899) at Sunderland, and a Balfe (J.) at Shelbourne. And what writer of fiction could ever arrive at such improbability as Shipperbottom, who once came from Old Boltonians to play for an amateur English Eleven?

We have suggested that goalkeepers are above suspicion. I cannot remember a goalkeeper involved in controversy on the field of play. With full-backs the case is somewhat different, for they operate within or on the fringe of the penalty area. It is not infrequent for a heated back to turn black into white and to argue the site of a foul (it is rather casuistic this debate, not as to the actuality of the offence, which is admitted, but as to its geographic situation).

* Testing my theory of names by the winning teams detailed today I find Bathgate and Hughes (Chelsea), Mozley and Parr (Derby), Bamford and Fox (Bristol Rovers).

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This side of the line, says referee. That, says back. And then the debate is thrown open to the house.

The good full-back, of course, such as Ramsay or Eckersley or Scott, has no need of reliance on improper tactics, which catch the referee's displeasure. But if he should infringe let him accept the referee's objectivity. In the maintenance of the highest ethical standards full-backs bear a special responsibility. That so much is done so fairly and so well is in no small measure due to the modest chivalry of the general run of full-backs.

There was a time when the quality of a full-back was judged by his pre-eminence in long kicking. This art was formerly cultivated at the Universities. (Since recent graduates have taken to the professions of cricket and football, and Universities are more conscious of vocational training than they were, is it not time for the inauguration of Chairs in these departments? Even though B.F.—Bachelor of Football—looks initially inferior to B.A.) Long kicking and high kicking are now, however, marks of poor workmanship. Your full-back plays as a member of a team and contrives to see one of his companions in safe possession of the ball by the most direct route, i.e., a straight line. Or there is the method of retrograde progression, very becoming under necessity, but tiresome when a mannerism. The full-back sends the ball back to the goalkeeper who with the advantages of time and those rules made to prevent his molestation, can pinpoint Matthews, or

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Steel, or Delaphena, or Lofthouse: then checkmate in two moves. The full-back who prides himself on providing unnecessary corners and throws-in for the opposition is a menace to society and, if I may say so, does his side no service because the terraces and stands become restive. The same applies to the deplorable fellow who deliberately stops the ball with his hand. I saw a match the other day in which persistence in this led to what they call incidents.

It was a London club which was involved. I was for once exalted by someone's kindness to the company of the elect. I was in the grandstand. The lady before me, whose fur coat would have been bartered for a full-back before the war, put beringed hands on the wooden rail, leaned over the referee's ear and stridently observed, 'Send 'im off, ref. . . . What a ref! 'E wasn't looking. . . .' There was more, but being repetitively abusive, needs no further space here. It is only under the stress of unpunished handling offences that ladies in fur coats and grandstands lose their aspirates with their patience.

Real full-backs win their fame by manœuvre and this is the secret of Arsenal's great record. Of Hapgood, therefore, it was written: 'Slightly built, he succeeds by his quick anticipation and all round cleverness rather than by any display of force. . . .' It was the secret of Scottish technical dominance, in the days of Carabine of Third Lanark, of Andrew Beattie of Preston North End. Such players appeared to put invisible hazards, which were none the less

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real, in the way of the oncoming forward. Or in the thirties I recollect the one step forward of bald-headed backs from Aston Villa which so skilfully and silently nullified opposite effort because the attack was compromised by being placed offside.

Aston Villa should frequently give account in their publications of Howard Spencer, who might one day be canonized as the patron saint of full-backs. (He was started the right way once.)

Spencer is in some respects the knight-errant of the football field. He is one of a select band who has done much to keep the game pure, sweet and clean. One of these days when the game reaches a dignity and a social status that it has not yet attained—a status equal to that attained by the dramatic profession—one can almost imagine King Edward, the royal patron of the Football Association, sending for the Aston Villa captain, asking him to kneel, and sending him forth to the world as Sir Howard Spencer.

But I fear we shall not have Sir Full-back until forwards reach the peerage. And there is a principle for a Second Chamber at least as promising as the hereditary.

HALF AND HALF

THE LAWS OF football will have it that a team comprises eleven men. This is eleven-fourteenths of a truth, for if proper count is made it will be discovered by any rational calculator (this excludes accountants, bankers, and football pool promoters) that a team has in fact a total strength of fourteen. By a mysterious process of selection known only to the great masters of management—Whittaker, Busby, Cullis and so on—there are certain footballers who maintain a symbiotic principle whereby each of these players, who from the exterior counts as a unit, is in reality the container of two separate performing organisms. He—for the sake of convenience I must be allowed to synthesize the two ‘hes’—is equal in defence and in attack. Hence he is called a half-back. This abbreviates, like *piano* for *pianoforte*, half-back, half-forward.

Butler had it of the Puritans he disliked

Cleric before, and Lay behind:
A lawless linsy-woolsy brother,
Half of one order, half another.

Which serves to show the dangers of duality. Half-

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backs will know that often they are discovered by me (i.e., the spectator) in the wrong place. In partial defence when needed forward, or the other way round. Incidentally I must say I like 'lawless linsy-woolsy brother' to define that particular type of centre-half who practises obstruction but is gloried in euphemism as a 'stopper'. I hate this term: it belongs to bottles. But I believe Shakespeare had this type in mind, in *Henry V*, for thus we see

. . . another half stand laughing by,
All out of work, and cold for action.

In water-polo—and hints from this game might be taken by Bristol City whose ground from time to time is best suited to aquatic display—the centre-half alternates in attack with the centre-forward. In football I cannot help feeling that this would be a useful expedient when those switches which are so fashionable at the present time are in operation. One does not often see the old-fashioned method of dribbling in which a player appeared to have the ball tied to his foot. But among the greater pleasures is the sight of a player in full cry, forcing a path through the defence from the half-way line and perfecting the solo movement with a goal.

I did, in fact, see a young full-back, new fledged, run with temerity almost the length of the field the other day. He completed his action where one would expect to find the outside-right and he dispatched

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the ball goalwards as to the outside position born. Oh, the zest of it. The feeling that points were immaterial, that goals were to be won for intelligent and versatile full-backs. I have Mr Carey on my side.

It is a true axiom that goals begin in your own goalmouth and I don't mean against you! I hate to be forced to kick the ball into touch. Start building up from your own territory. A simple pass to your wing half-back and a short sprint into position for a return pass, and then on to your inside-forward colleague.

They, as St. John Gogarty has it, are too often

Tall unpopular men

with one negative purpose. Although this purpose has not traditionally received encouragement from the English selectors.

I have the recipe for training half-backs to the correct philosophy. Let them learn to play the viola. I say this in all seriousness: not because I have had experience of footballers as viola players but because I did teach a very young full-back—who came from Swindon—to play the piano. And he played very well. Nor did his football suffer.

Now violas form the half-back division of the orchestra. They can play high, they can play low. Their development, like that of half-backs, is essentially modern. Take them away and a coach and four may drive through the score. Let them fall

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back too far in defence and they merely, as in early symphonies of the eighteenth century, impede the action of the rearguard cellos and basses. On the other hand give them too much free rein in the treble and they put violins out of employment. But give them the athletic versatility allowed by Berlioz and Elgar and they give both grace and power. There is, I sense, a qualitative viola tone in the superb richness of Jack Vernon. If this passage is remote from your immediate experience say 'Danny Blanchflower who went from Glentoran to Barnsley'. That is what a viola sounds like.¹⁰

You may, however, exceed my expectations and propose that the cor anglais is also a mid-field instrument, albeit temperamental. Among the cor anglais sort of half-backs would go Kinsella of Drumcondra, and Andredi of Switzerland. (For French horns read aloud 'Prouff, Cuissard, Leduc', an international line of 1946.)

It is often suggested in Lancashire that the true source of all goodness and wisdom is Lancashire. I wondered whether there was not some truth in this when I turned up the colourful career of Kelly Houlter. He—who was mistaken for Scotch in Scotland and Irish in Ireland, first because of the pride which either country would have felt in possession of such an one, and secondly because of the nature of his name—was a native of Blackburn. He was born,

¹⁰ Blanchflower is now, of course, with Aston Viola (nearly, but not quite, *sic*).

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so to speak, with a silver football in his mouth, for the 1883 1890 period was the Golden Age of Blackburn and within that time the English Cup was four times won by the Rovers. It was twenty years or so later that Houlter was in his heyday. And now read the contemporary chronicler:

To see Houlter stripped for the conflict is to see a mettled steed frolicking for the race, or a war-horse snorting for the battle. He walks out of the dressing-room with a quickness and lightness of step that carry his ten-stone weight as jauntily as at a dance, and shrugs his powerful shoulders. An intelligent gleam is in his eyes. . . . How does this little half-back bring about the confusion of any number of opposing giants? He is quick—quick as a terrier. He is fast—fast as a hare. He is neat and skilful with his feet as a clog dancer of his native county, as accurate in his judgement as the Lord High Chancellor . . . and is in several places—or so it seems—at once. He is as agile as a flea and as difficult to catch. . . . He bewilders with his activity and omnipresence, and yet out of the chaos he appears to move in he directs the storm with a subtle brain. In the fire and heat of the game he becomes the embodiment of perpetual motion.

Do we as well as that today, or do we not? I can't find out, for the old will have ancient time the best, while the young, despite the catastrophes prophesied for them by those elderly statesmen who are the architects of present and future disaster, rightly believe that the new outshines the old and that the best is yet to be. As for me, I am happy in the faith

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that Wright is peerless and that the displays of Cockburn and Dickinson and Mercer and Cullis are of such distinction that we cannot properly expect to enjoy better.

These modern half-backs, however, are often more economical than the old, more deft, more intellectual. Their constructive philosophy makes the best of modern football as a game of chess rather than a war of attrition. When a whole team unites in such formal precision with the bishops sliding long passes to the wings, the knights sidestepping piece after piece, the rooks firm in lateral defence, the queen ready to give the *coup de grâce* we have what is miscalled classical football. Miscalled, I say, because the intellectual foundations are stronger now than formerly. But such style needs complement. One team alone may not play it while opponents hack their way through ninety minutes with as much responsibility as a schoolboy teaching his father how to play draughts.

Here we have some part of the reason for surprises in cup-ties and international matches against more volatile opponents.

In so far as we have intellectual football and, in Division I, I believe we generally do, we owe it to the nerve-centre of the football equipage—the half-back line. Which goes also to show why captaincy best resides there.

Every footballer is something of a specialist—although he must in case of emergency be also a

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general practitioner—and the wing half-back especially so. From time to time he determines tactics by throwing the ball. It was, I suppose, Weaver of Newcastle United who used to stagger credulity by the vast distance which he could fling the ball. Then followed the period of exuberance in this art. Now subtlety reigns. The long throw may be used in defence to give the goalkeeper opportunity to initiate attack, or in attack almost as dangerously as a corner kick. But the movement is effortless and of all actions of the human body most rhythmical. And that, to me, is its own end.

I notice our half-backs are tireless men. So it was ever. I love the sagas of Hugh Wilson who made with Auld and Gibson a great Sunderland trio of what may now be regarded as the medieval period of Anglo-Scottish (for Sunderland then was virtually a Scottish side with an English title) culture. Wilson was able to throw the ball from the half-way line into the opposing goalmouth. It is true that one-handed throwing was then permissible (indeed the law in this respect was altered on account of Wilson's prodigies of propulsion) but, even so, the feat is difficult of emulation. Wilson was the arch-iconoclast, for he could reduce the reputation of a whole forward line single-handed (and footed?). But after twelve years as a half-back he put his accuracy and power as a shooter at the disposal of Third Lanark. There, on his native soil, may his honour safely be left.

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Then there was the heroic centre-half of Manchester United—Charles Roberts, the finest of all players in that position according to Charles Buchan. He formerly played for Grimsby and was transferred to Manchester for £400, which in Edwardian days shocked those spectators who disapproved of the practice of purchasing fame. But Roberts was something of an amphibian and returned to Grimsby each summer to sail a trawler. There was some consternation one summer when he disappeared on the high seas with Whittaker of Brentford, who exchanged a goal- for a fishing-net. They were, before eventual separation, reported in Iceland. But Reykjavik was no northern Bogota. Roberts and Whittaker were after fish.

If one place, however, has precedence over others in the matter of half-backs it must be Ellesmere Port. An impossible, invisible place is that territory resigned by Cheshire from the northern Wirral to the industrial Lancashire. But Lancashire refused the gift. The people of Cheshire wondered what should be done and then recalled that, after all, Ellesmere Port should retain its citizenship; for on the bleak, standless waste of a football ground there was the principal academy for the art of modern half-back play. There were born (in the football sense) Cullis and Mercer. If I remember aright the team was, in those days, Ellesmere Port Cement. Which has a moral, has it not?

INSIDE

IT IS INSUFFICIENTLY recognized that football is the only means whereby the commonalty—the ‘our people’, odious phrase of the ambitious politician—preserve the vestiges of classical education. It is said to be ennobling to have knowledge of the Latin and Greek tongues¹¹: it is generally said by those who have a vested interest in the propagation of such knowledge (just as I, in private interest, refer you frequently to the benefits of a musical education). Apart from the professors and those of their pupils who intend also to become professors the only acquaintances I have who frequently and easily use Latin terminology are football spectators. Their vocabulary counts *versus*, *stadium*, *arena*, *Villa*, *nihil* (*nil*), and curiously (and if well acquainted with the police), *Amor*¹².

When it is realized that the smallest boys of Windsor know what the *stadium* is and where it is, and

¹¹ Lack of space precludes examination of Greek influence, but Londoners will be able to supply the names of four Leagues which signify in this connection. What are they? See page 93. And what of Pegasus?

¹² W G of Reading and England Amateur XI.

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that our grandfathers in Birmingham or in Manchester (if we had any) were used to quote

Here was a Cæsar! when comes such another
it is evident that the Roman occupation of Britain was at least far-reaching. This Cæsar, for the ill-read, was, of course, Cæsar Jenkyns. Nevertheless he could divide Gaul, or anywhere else, into three parts.

I am reasonably certain that an archæologist who has not been hemmed in by thousands of fellow spectators can appreciate what the amphitheatres were like when in use. There was I in Caerleon last summer. I stood on the terracing (our football ground method of accommodation is obviously of Roman amphitheatrical origin) and looked into the little arena. A ghostly ex-serviceman from the Second Legion muttered that he was sick of seeing the same old inefficient gladiators and why didn't they go into the transfer market. . . .

The last great flowering of Roman skill was surely in our modern Horatius; he who, in his active end, preferred the Humber to the Tiber and acted (and still, happily, acts) in a consular capacity at Hull. He was born not far from the Roman Wall and has never forgotten the intellectual quality of his native, north-eastern outpost. I notice that his contemporaries, whether colleagues or rivals, both allow and admire his greatness. When they compare his appearance—for his head, which time hath to silver

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turned, is distinctive—with that of a university professor they flatter the professor; when they fall back on *maestro* (though I would go further back to *magister*), as is also the case with one other great player, they recognize that supreme eloquence in art which cannot be registered in the vernacular.

What does he do? Having, apparently, eyes in the back of his head he can unite his intentions with those of his half-back. He can achieve that ideal of football attack—a vacuum in the opposition which he will, outwitting his immediate opponent, fill himself or allow to a colleague. And this adduces another quality desirable in every footballer, but in none so essential as in an inside-forward. For his first duty is to supply the battery of the centre-forward with ammunition. The time comes, however, when the inside-forward is himself, at least *de facto*, a centre-forward. Then must he behave according to rank. This very day I read of our Horatius as goalscorer. And he has rarely missed an opportunity for something near a quarter of a century. For it was in 1927 that he played in schoolboy international matches for England. It was fitting that he should have been the captain of the Sunderland team of ten years later; the first Sunderland team to win the F A. Cup in forty years of endeavour.

He played for England in 1934 and was still playing for England in 1948. After helping Sunderland to the Cup he went to Derby in 1945 and—inevitably perhaps we should say—there the Cup went

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also. If we should live as long as our parents (which seems unlikely) and if we should become as conservative—with a small 'c'—as they (which would appear probable) we would speak of Carter as they of, say, Bloomer, also of Derby County, and with half a look at the north-east sadly quote

This was the noblest Roman of them all.

But I forget. My thesis benefits from one further example of a native of Whitburn St. Mary: Septimus¹⁸. He played with only less distinction and for a less notable (though not less praiseworthy) team than Sunderland or Derby: Leicester City.

Inside-forwards of the greatest usefulness are specialists in altruism. I saw it the other day. Holding back behind his fellow forwards a veteran (as they say) player picked up a lost pass. He held the ball for the fraction of a second needed for his young and virile companions to take up provocative stands within goalshot, and then slid the ball to him least embarrassed with distraction. Of course, you and I would have done the same but too many performers similarly placed would have preferred the uncertainty of individual effort. Him I saw was Alexander (of whom some still may talk in West Bromwich) McNab, also a member of the celebrated Sunderland side of 1937. He was still teaching the only lesson to be learned from experience: that in the greatest art simplicity is all.

¹⁸ Supply the surname. If incompetent turn to page 93.

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There have been those of a more baroque genius who have delighted spectators in the past by a capacity for perplexing not only foe but also friend; such was their eminence, however, they won medals for themselves and other trophies for their teams. Among them were Alex James and Clem Stephenson. Licence to digress in these days is, however, mostly given to outside-forwards and where the insides attempt digression as well, we are provided with those pointless, labyrinthine manœuvres which lead to mere frustration. Then crowds cry for the blood of the centre-forward, but he, poor fellow, is either compelled to serve as a square peg in a round hole or to disguise himself as a leprechaun. You know well enough the pretty

Wee folk, good folk,
Trooping all together;
Green jacket, red cap,
And white owl's feather!

There is the effect of too much elaboration in inside positions, which will cause an epidemic.

Those thus infected may study Derby County not only in the recent past of Carter and Steel but in the far distant past of Bloomer.

'When I see Bloomer coming at me with the ball at his toe I feel powerless to stop him.' Thus one goalkeeper who, I think, would have said the same of Mortensen. The reason:

He regards combination as one means towards an end. The aim and end of football is to get goals,

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and Bloomer will not be a party to mere finesse. Embroidery and fancy work he leaves to the artists that like that sort of thing. He is possessed with the one grand idea—to get goals, and to get them with the least possible expenditure of time and energy.

The inside positions seem sometimes to have been entailed. Therefore the Dunns and the Walkers of football, and with the Walkers we are in famous company. There are, of course, several Johnny Walkers, there are Tommy Walkers, Willie Walkers, Georgie Walkers and Frankie Walkers. There is one, and only one, Robbie Walker. He had twenty-nine international caps for Scotland when such honours were only in respect of matches played against the home counties. He was, by the stop-watch, not fast. But his mental agility and his power to delude his opponents made him the true father of that distinctively Scottish type of inside play, which the best of the English have copied. Walker's football was summarized by a rueful Robertson (who played first for Glasgow Rangers and then for that London Caledonian association, which was Chelsea): 'You would think that Robbie had eight feet. You go to tackle him where his feet were, but they're away when you get there.'

And now you may make your way among the Bennetts, Broadises, Shackletons, Pyes, Dohertys, Mannions (oh, most delectable Mannion!). . . . The end of things is not yet.

OUTSIDE

ON CHRISTMAS DAY there was the normal encounter between the Buffs and the Blues. The Buffs, if not unbeaten, were generally regarded as unbeatable. And yet, such is the glory of the impartial spectator's uncertainty, the Blues, level at half-time, ran berserk in fifteen minutes of glorious inspiration, scoring six goals. There is clearly much in the power of tradition, for I saw the same Blues some years back achieve triumph in the same way and by the same margin. Those who have read before of our intense local rivalries will know that those who lived in Buff streets drank dismally on Christmas night, changing Buff for black, and swearing never to visit the Buff ground again.

The next day, relatively out of their cups though still incredulous and somewhat bemused, they forgot their vows and were there again. In the places they had occupied for ten, twenty, fifty, even seventy years. With me, as with Lamb: 'The elders, with whom I was brought up, were of a character not likely to let slip the sacred observance of any old institution.'

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Only one turnstile was in operation; officers who controlled the other, less hardy than the spectators, had either died of shock, or transferred allegiance. Our progress terrace-wards—though terrace is a too ambitious word—was slow. A gentleman, cloth-capped and muffled, whose vocation was in the alchemic sanctuary of the Caustic Plant forgot neither his previous day's disappointment nor his work-a-day environment. 'Paying a bloody bob to see these buggars! I'd best go t'see t'other buggars.' The generous reference was, of course, to the Blues, who at that very moment were being prepared for action and defeat some five miles away. But our friend did not know that the Fates were, for once, acting, on his behalf.

The pessimism of Hardy is a bad companion for the spectator as this tale, which ended so happily with the annihilation of Blues and with a four-goal victory for Buffs, shows

One episode from our match left the man from the Caustic Plant speechless. I grant you that needed little, for he was a critic of no more than four words. His thoughts were, however, in his eyes. The young, graceful outside-right, tutored in a famous nursery and let out, so to speak, on bail, had the ball at the half-way line: he had it also six yards from the opposing goalkeeper. In the interval he had feinted to go to the touch-line and had sent one half-back that fruitless way. He came in and, having deceived three more opponents in the same fashion, preserved

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the integrity of his diagonal. My friend's eyes shone.

The outside right did what other outside-rights have done, though clearly he considered himself the first to endure this despondency. In Rugby football he would have been credited with an excellent goal, but under the present circumstances he could not even be allowed a near miss.

My friend's eyes no longer shone. He had no need of speech. There were, however, gentler souls, not descended from Mrs Battle. They applauded the refinement of the artist in our outside-right, while secretly aware that the peculiar charm of youthful intuition often lacks consummation in logic or philosophy. But justice worked overtime. It was from the outside-right that the winning goal came, for after the first none mattered. He shook an ambiguous ball from a full-back's foot, eluded the recovering defence, and sent the ball easily to an unhampered centre-forward who, as our journal said on the following Friday, 'did the rest'.

Two opportunities came to the outside-right. It would be untrue to say that he wasted one, although I know a few materialists (like the man from the Caustic Plant) would dissent. With the other—and this is indisputable—he made a goal. The moral is drawn for those outside-forwards who have moulded themselves on a misinterpretation of George Herbert's lines:

Some men a forward motion love
But I by backward steps would move.

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It is certain that half of the defeated teams in England and Scotland may ascribe their defeats, when by one goal or two, to a propensity of the forwards, and particularly the outside-forwards, to put themselves in reverse. In mid-season doldrums I have seen the most recent Manchester United, Fulham and West Bromwich teams guilty in this respect. Of course, as they would probably admit, credit belongs to a defensive system which can force the unwilling to believe themselves in direct advance when, at best, they go either *per recte et retro* or *cancrizans*.

These two useful Latin phrases may be elucidated. The first—through (*per*) the right-back (*recte et retro*)—refers to the back pass from the wing man to his own full-back who probably, in turn, scores through his own goal. The second—like a crab—is applied to wing men who have a predilection for taking the ball from their own wing to the other and then probably scoring a direct hit in the visitors' dressing-room rather than in the visitors' goal.

But there are some peripatetics on the left and on the right whom we love because they are purposeful. Hence our affection for Mr Hancocks, who would score goals or send accurate passes from the top of the grandstand if he was so required. Often we do not see him for the minute. He reappears where we would expect the inside-left, as though he has discovered some convenient subterranean passage. Indeed there is something of the recusant about him

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and I should have enjoyed his discomfiture of Elizabethan or Jacobean heresy hunters. He is uncatchable.

That is the justification of genius. But genius is inimitable. Therefore the novice is better advised to follow the well-worn paths trodden by the generality of outside-forwards—down the touch-line, along the goal-line, and no wayside dalliance. That is the way of safety, security, contentment and a quinquennial benefit of £750.

The meteor's tail is elusive; that is why normally level-tempered full-backs sometimes forget themselves and try to jump on it. And then they find Mowat of Rutherglen or Pearce of Luton on their tails. And the spectators, in turn, on theirs. And all the time Mr Matthews who started it sits, in sly rumination, half-way up Parnassus—approached Chestertonianly *via* Stoke and Blackpool. And near him Meredith, who took an alternative way *via* Chirk, Northwich, Manchester and Rhyl.

I must be allowed my Meredith (William—not George, who was in the cricket camp) as man of letters. He writes—or wrote—this of the professional footballer:

Every hour of the day almost he lives in an atmosphere which reminds him of nothing else but football; and he finishes the week playing before a great crowd of people, who often expect him to perform more like a machine than a human being subject to pains, aches, illnesses, to say nothing of

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some ugly wound which the stud of a boot has opened, but which his pluck and loyalty to his club causes him to forget in his whole-souled desire to secure a victory for his side.

That is why I love my footballer as a worthy and honest labourer in the commonwealth.

Mr Meredith points out how the wing player is almost the least immune from touch-line criticism and yet, with all the space allowed to him, almost the most affected by scurvy accidents of climate and fate.

The puff of wind under the ball in a lengthy flight from the wing may mean all the difference between a miss and a hit, a goal or a failure, that a heavy ground causes the ball often to stop when it strikes, whilst a fast one may mean its rivalling a cricket ball for pace. . . .

Since the vexations of wing play are so great it is excellent that so many industriously unselfish players have been content to work there, negligent of praise or blame.

A coincidence of recollection brings two cricketers in here. Denis Compton, whose immortality is secure, was not a great footballer in the sense that he was indispensable, but he was eager, zealous, painstaking, content to subordinate his personal intuition to the general design of Arsenal. His Cup Winner's medal was as merited as any, for, in football, Compton was not so much the great exception as the golden rule. Of the same order is George

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Dews who plays with equal devotion cricket for Worcestershire and football for Plymouth Argyle. Like Compton he is superb at cutting off boundaries in the one season and reducing the impulsive pass to the corner flag in the other. And behind these two stand two hardly less illustrious figures—Hendren and Walden, the one of Brentford, the other of Tottenham; the latter surely the neatest and most refined among all practitioners at the two games.

Unwittingly we have been drawn away—as wing-forwards tend to distract—from our appreciation of the common—common, that is, as opposed to uncommon I like to remember, in his war-time setting, Lester Finch who played so long and notably for Barnet and the England Amateur XI. He came, and for a while in old gold, would exercise the amateur traditions of energetic perseverance in a professional milieu. Finch was, I suppose, an ancient then, for he had played for England in 1933 (and was still playing for Barnet when, in 1946, they won the F.A. Amateur Cup). But, an excellent athlete, he looked ageless; though what I now see in the green parts of memory is his whimsical tug of pants as a signal before action.

I like to remember the resilient endeavour of Liddell, the waspish swiftness of Delaney (though partisanship has often made me repent the generosity of Scotland towards Liverpool and Manchester), the elegant *con brio* of Gordon Smith; or further back in point of time Niewenhuys of Kroon-

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stad and Liverpool, or Worrall of Portsmouth, whose efficiency was first cultivated on our doorstep.

All this gallery is defined in the recollection by the dangerous arcs of the corner-kick, one from the left and one from the right. For herein lies the deepest specialization of the wing-forward. A corner-kick is potentially a goal. (If I remember rightly some obscure Irish and Scottish competitions, held out of season, involve the settlement of draws not by extra time but by advantage in corners. A dangerous precedent, but how it might brighten the wits of our dullest full-backs.)

The classic corner-kick is that by which Arsenal defeated Chelsea in 1950 in the replayed semi-final of the F.A. Cup.

Comment is superfluous, except to say that to ascribe such to luck is to undercalculate the skill expected of a specialist in corner-kicks.

There is, of recent months, a tendency for outside-forwards to score prolifically—an excellent answer to the adamant centre-half. It should be remembered that such incisive behaviour was the characteristic of Bastin. But his 33 goals from the outside-left (and Meredith's 36 from the right) in one season was inferior to the record of Dawson of Falkirk, who scored 39 as an outside-left. That is fifteen years ago. The palimpsest is indistinct. But new names and new records shall surely soon appear.

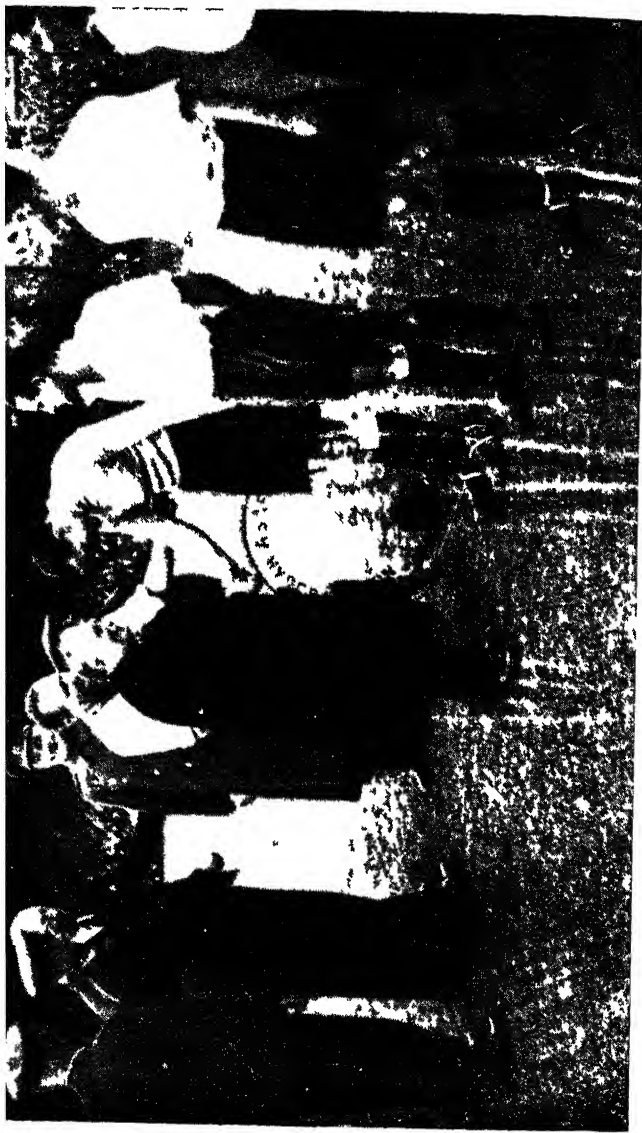
CENTRE

I FINISHED BREAKFAST — which on Saturday mornings in distant hotels consists principally of newspaper (nor is this a reflection on British hoteliers)—and went out. Behind me and still in careful study of kippers or sausages was the London Combination team of Aldershot. On any other day and in any other place I would have prolonged breakfast to a third cup of coffee on the offchance of conversation. But this was Plymouth and the sun was shining. There was the Hoe. And there was Sir Francis Drake. I should, perhaps, explain that some part of my affection for him comes from the knowledge that he gave half a dozen musicians free passage round the world in *The Golden Hind*. It is not the free passage that strikes me, however, but the fact that Drake was prepared to live on the same ship for so long in such company.

Statues are what people look at when they have nothing to do. But this statue of Drake is not of that sort. It is athletic. It is muscular. Sir Francis needs but little encouragement to come down from his pedestal.



‘CHELSEA v ARSENAL AT STAMFORD BRIDGE’ FROM A PAINTING BY CHARLES CUNDALL, R.A.



SWIFT OF ENGLAND BEING GREETED BY THE BURGOMASTER OF BRUSSELS, OCTOBER 1944

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So irreverently I stood before him in admiration and said to myself, 'What a centre-forward!' I must confess contributory causes for this heretical gobbet of art criticism (although I flatter myself that all my Devonshire readers will go now and *look* at the said statue, which they won't have done before). First, those round objects at the base of the next plinth. Bowls? No the wrong shape. Cannon balls? No, too obvious. No sculptor would make an object so readily recognizable. I had it, they were the archetypes of the size 4 football with which the Portuguese endeavoured to prevent an English victory on the one occasion on which England beat Portugal in Portugal by 10 goals.

Drake? Centre-forward? The whole thing dawned on me as I listened to broadcast commands bouncing off the decks of a destroyer in the Sound. Ted Drake. . . .

And Ted Drake, if I may say so, was something of a buccaneer among centre-forwards. It is pretty certain that any shot of his would have singed the King of Spain's beard. For Ted Drake was the sort of centre-forward common in the '20's and early '30's, but less frequent latterly. It seemed crudely simple. You kicked the ball—true you kicked it hard—and there was a goal. And this happened in every match: or, to be on the safe side, in every home match. Although, it may be recalled, Drake did score 42 goals in one season, which allowed one a match and none for cup-ties (in that year, 1935,

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Arsenal didn't win the Cup, anyway). While still on the subject of Drake—for I will have it that our centre-forwards do not score goals as they should and should therefore aim at obliterating some of these rather longstanding records—it may further be recalled, though not near Aston, that he scored 7 goals in one match against the Villa.

During that period there were other prolific players who accomplished goals with ease but with *éclat* also. Rather as Czerny in respect of his Studies. Dean reached Op. 60 for Everton in one season (1927-28) but even this was less than the achievement of Smith of Ayr United who, in the very same year, went up to 66. Scottish Division B, say you. Well, they still have goalkeepers and good ones there. Then in Luton, when recent memories and records have been sombre, they can say Payne. And Payne, in Luton, means him who scored 10 goals on one day in one match—against Bristol Rovers. . . . Bristol Rovers—that starts another and nobler story.

There I must come back to statues. Why do these men have no statues erected?

I am all in favour of municipal patronage of the arts, but I fear that progress in public appreciation will be slow so long as whiskered councillors, burgesses, prelates and royal dukes (whose qualities have long been dissipated) give implicit advice, on a large scale, that sculpture is but frozen morality. Not even Epstein could find very much to inspire

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originality given such a subject—together with the characteristic inscription. But what might be done I will suggest, noting, meanwhile, that one little work of great elegance and full of rhythm and mobility lies to hand for inspiration: *The Young Football Player* by Clémentin Dissard. And, of course, not forgetting that a great part of Greek art had an athletic foundation.

It is customary in England to compromise. In this matter of football sculpture we may therefore make a start on a forward line of some sanctity: Campbell Wheeler, Cooke, Weldon, Ryle and Harmer. This was the invincible vanguard of King's College, Cambridge, in 1879. The first two became incumbent and ordained headmaster, but the last three bishops.

We could continue with other ancients.

Why should Blackburn not have a monument to Jimmy Brown. 'Every reader,' wrote Arnold Bennett, 'will remember with a thrill the historic match in which the immortal Jimmy Brown dribbled the ball himself down the length of the field, scored a goal, and went home with the English Cup under his arm.' But if Brown is thus to stand for ever in Blackburn, John Southworth should be by his side, for when he was centre-forward the Rovers went three seasons without losing, provided that he played.

In Sunderland they should have Alfred Common. He in photogravure is a sad man and well he might

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be. For extravagance in transfer payment commenced when he left Sunderland for Middlesbrough—for £1,000.

In Nottingham, Dr Tinsley Lindley, a Corinthian who played for both Notts Forest and County, and a cricketer who scored a century for Oxford at Lords and more than one for Nottinghamshire at Trent Bridge.

At Charterhouse, G. O. Smith, who of the older school was perhaps the greatest and England's leader for many years.

At White Hart Lane, Vivian Woodward.

At Wolverhampton or Bristol, Bill Beats: for Bill Beats is too apt as a football name to be lost.

In Burslem they might erect a monument to the great, if fictitious, Callear. And if you object to fictional heroes being admitted to this gallery let it be noted that Peter Pan is allowed his place in London and Kirriemuir. If Peter Pan is a boy who never grew up then so are most of us sportsmen. And not growing up is, in the end, far more valuable than growing up.

I suspect that centre-forwards in the olden days were notable individualists, who often battered their way to supremacy. I seem to recall those of my extreme youth. They often charged at the citadel with heavy shoulders, so that we too, often on hard asphalt, hurled our six or seven stone against smaller compatriots in unscientific emulation.

But the new age of science has tended towards a

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new creature. Thus in the natural operation of the process of evolution there are our Lawtons, Duquemins, Milburns and Bentleys. These are remarkable assets to the art of centre-forward play, for they are jack-o'-lanterns who confuse their opponents by unexpected entries. They are high intellectuals, participating in the enchanting pattern play of modern forward style. They are unselfish too, more often content to make rather than to take goals. The disadvantage of their technique from our point of view is that sometimes a team, thus led, will give the appearance of having two inside-lefts and one inside-right (or *vice versa*), but no centre-forward. There must be a resolved leading note in a final cadence. But sometimes there is not. Then we go home in disgruntlement.

It is a matter of intimate understanding. Thus it is often difficult to select a centre-forward for an international side—as, of late, the English Selectors have, to their cost, discovered. The most eminent practitioners in centre-forward play are unhappy when detached from their accustomed partners. There is a powerful argument for a national side to play together far more frequently. Indeed were I to be allowed an opinion where angels fear to tread I would have an England XI (*plus reserves*) elected for a whole season and I would have them play together in various provincial places against whatever worthy opposition can be provided. Much more fun for the ardent spectator than the irrelevant Inter-

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League matches. This reasoning is not original, I fear; for do not the Scotsmen in their wisdom turn out a League XI, which in effect is Scotland?

And I seem to remember that my favoured Mr Steele, now of Mansfield Town, said how much it meant to him when he played for England with Matthews on one wing and his other clubman Johnson on the other. Certainly the aerodynamics of that combination were, long ago, past all ingenuity. From the high bank we looked down to see a ball adrift on invisible elastic; to and fro, to and fro until Mr Steele tightened the elastic. . . . But we will go no farther lest we fall into the same pit whercin lie our elders!

Modern forward play in all its elegance can only be understood by the musician. For tell me where else but in football or music is five part invertible counterpoint to be met. The last movement of the *Jupiter* has five tunes: all are interchangeable but with what speed, precision, and imagination. . . . Go and listen to it. Then watch the five stranded part writing of Tottenham Hotspur. My intention in this *Winter's Tale*, stabs the centre—I hope.

PLAYERS IN RETIREMENT

I

IT IS FORTY years since Pat F—— left the football field for the last time as a player. He was a good one. He went away from us as a young man for a higher life in Manchester, and then in Bristol. I often speculate as to what he did with life during these transitions. He played football and trained, for he was, up to the end of his active life, a purist as far as fitness was concerned. But to go from a tiny country town with only the beginnings of industry apparent, to the great cities, must have astonished inexperience beyond credulity. And in the great cities Pat F—— became a man of some considerable fame. For is not every football player, since time immemorial, a notable?

There lies the danger. For early fame can change into a millstone of discontent. As it was once why not now? Where is the money which was once so easy? Where are the patrons and aristocratic associates? Why no longer can we not travel in ease and luxuriate in hotels and enjoy seaside holidays, disguised as 'special training'?

To leave all that behind and to know that it has

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gone for ever is to face a crisis. To meet such a crisis—which being personal is of the deepest significance—with resolution demands both courage and philosophy. Courage because one is returned to one's origins to start life again, with the first hopes fulfilled but nothing beyond them. Philosophy because the imaginative life of the future must refresh itself on that of the past. So that for forty years Pat F—and others like him re-live the accidents and excitements of encounters on the football field with their families and their friends.

In this case there is not, nor ever was, discontent. Which makes a story with a moral. And not only for sportsmen but for poets and painters and singers and composers, who are all liable to such fluctuations of fortune as bring success too soon—or too late.

Pat F— folded his tents in Bristol and stole silently home. He played, at home, once or twice after that but his time was devoted mostly to the service of his new employers. He was and remained a shiftman. Now it is harder to maintain loyalty as a more or less anonymous shiftman than as a popular footballer. But he did.

He went to the Liberal Club once or twice a week—like all geniuses at ball games he could shine generally—and played billiards. At the weekends he exercised his pigeons, sometimes sending them away for championship races. Pigeon fanciers abound at home and the occupation may be taken as an index

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of character, in much the same way as the other reflective sports of gardening or fishing. I now can never see a transitory pigeon without thinking of this old footballer. On Sundays he was unfailing at Mass, for his ancestors left Ireland in the famine.

Now he doesn't leave the house very often. Neither his health nor his memory are as they were. 'Do you remember Pat F——?' I asked one of my acquaintance. 'Yes. He was a good, clean-living man.'

II

'Pray silence for His Worship the Mayor.' We settled down after the Mayoral arrival. He was a smallish man, rather bald, with prominent, jutting features and blue eyes. His speech modest, quiet, direct, still not quite free from an inflection which comes from further north. His opinions moderate, tolerant and humane. In business engagements meticulous and punctual. As the first citizen he made it a duty to be first in responsibility and his private life was willingly sacrificed for the common good. But all was done without advertisement or ostentation.

To the best of my knowledge Tom P—— was the first professional footballer to be elected mayor of a great town. I hope he will not be the last.

There is an unpopular fallacy that gentility depends on qualities which require expensive inculcation at establishments primarily founded (or re-founded) within the last hundred years in order to

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obliterate the shame of domestic illiteracy. It is, perhaps, worth noting the conclusions of an educationist. They are that education knows no rules, that it has no abiding home, and that we can never be very sure of what it finally consists. A knows all about economics and achieves much success in making many people miserable. He is acquainted with Chaucer and can talk about Botticelli. He, they say, is educated. B is a storekeeper, knowledgeable only on football. His knowledge adds to rather than subtracts from the little total of our community's happiness. Which is the educated man of the two? B has, I feel, a large philosophic appreciation of affairs. A has not. There is the difference between knowing and merely knowing about.

Now Tom P—— is one who knows and has a large philosophy. Schooled by experience and with the widest acquaintance with people he is, in sympathy, the world's best listener. And listeners are greater assets than talkers.

Tom is no talker in the direction of anecdote. He rarely has a word about the distinction of the team of which he was a member.

Others can speak, however, of his swift onslaughts as a centre-forward twenty-five years ago: and he still can prove a straight eye when googlies come his occasional way in the summer.

He has developed a business with quiet efficiency, has occupied himself in schemes of one sort or another for the benefit of society, and has become

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the President of the Rotary Club. A man of education? The answer is indisputable. His school and his university a football club: to which innate industry has added post-graduate training both general and generous.

As in the case of Dr Johnson and Dr Burney my heart goes out to that man.

III

I saw the painful end of George D——'s playing career. In the first half he was, at inside-right, the clear master among his pupils. He did not appear to move. The ball found him and he found a colleague, but the opposing defence rarely found either. 'It's class that tells,' my companion pointed out. It was. George had been for some time on the transfer list of a Lancashire team in the Second Division, but he had a suspect knee. More than once it had wrenched. Thus he came to relinquish the ardours of the English League. But football was as much part of his nature as writing is of mine, and if his knee wouldn't work in one environment then he gave it opportunity in another.

Therefore George came down amongst us once a week and was liked as much for his kindly personality as for his effortless football. Make no mistake it was effortless and it was charmingly done—as when a great fiddler comes to play a concerto in all sincerity and simplicity with an amateur orchestra.

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In the first half we saw George at his best. And so it continued until, mid-way through the second half, he swivelled goalwards too fast. That was the end. The knee would not take the strain. George was carried back to the dressing-room.

I saw him a week later. It was after the Cup Final in which he should have played and towards which he had contributed so much. He was in the hotel lounge. He was delighted on his colleagues' account, but his pleasure was mitigated by personal disappointment. I suspected, however, that the veiled melancholy in his eyes was part of his proper personality. For he was a quiet, pleasantly-spoken man, in his middle thirties, recognizing football as being no more and no less than it is. It is possible that he had other aspirations in early life but that environment compelled him to capitalize, immediately, his athletic talents. He was the antithesis of the hearty, conventional sportsman of the 'when we get to the 18th. . . . Have another drink old man' type. His quality may thus be recognized.

Somewhere in the south of Lancashire George manages a public house. I must go there one day.

IV

I noticed an obituary. It was brief and as follows :
'Herbert Smith, who played at full-back for Oxford City, Reading and England and was President of the

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Oxfordshire F.A. since 1919 died on January 6th, 1951, at the age of 73.'

I looked back to the records of nearly half a century ago when, as captain of the Reading F.C., Herbert Smith first played for England.

His courage is as notable as his consideration for others. With him no game, however adversely the fates seem to run, is lost till the final whistle blows. By his superb pluck he has turned many an impending defeat into a narrow victory. In the hour of defeat he is even more a hero than in the hour of victory. His honest congratulations to the victors inspire the deepest respect and admiration, while his winsome manner in sympathizing with the vanquished makes him one of the most popular men at present playing football.

There is not so much knight-errantry abroad that we can afford to despise it. These men in their own way have diffused something of it: thus we may honour their calling.

THE ARBITER OF OTHERS' FATE

IT IS SYMPTOMATIC of the British capacity for seeing things in proportion that referees are qualified by examination, whereas councillors, aldermen, parliamentarians are not. This is in accordance with our traditions of fair play, for while the ability of the first class to pass examinations is not in doubt, that of the second class is. The results of the system bring out both the best and the worst in human nature. Referees are subject to frequent criticism, the legislators of national or local affairs much less. There is a certain rough logic in this dismal aptitude of ours for putting last things first for, recognizing the long training in both theory and practice which is the *sine qua non* of the referee, we try to judge our Pearces, Raes, Fletchers, Mortimers, Craigmyles, and so on, by the highest standards. Alas! we do not always take the hint. We sway our judgements by prejudice. Crossing my heart I must confess that none of the tribe of referees I have seen have really had need of the spectacles which, with unmerited derision, I have prescribed.

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The hazards of the life are many. I wasn't at the particular match—in fact I was glad that I wasn't—but I read every newspaper account of the activities of the referee who was smuggled away from Brandywell in a mortuary van. He was, by the grace of God, alive, and, to the best of my knowledge, has survived to this day. But I doubt whether he will ever again have the temerity to disallow goals from Derry City at Derry. Such was the local feeling that for nine days he displaced James II, of malignant memory, in popular execration. So far as I can remember the match ended prematurely and the officials, suspending *Habeas Corpus*, kept the referee in protective custody until some driver of fortitude could be persuaded, bribed, or compelled to take him to an unknown destination under cover of darkness. (The tale could take a neatly sinister Liam O'Flaherty-ish turn here if we cared to indulge our tragic fancy.)

Now the mortuary van and the mortuary driver were all that could be found for this unsavoury assignment. But van, driver, petrol and oil were public property and those whose petty occupation it is to snipe at misdirection of public funds and maladministration asked by what warrant this exceptional action was taken. Had the Burial of the Dead Committee approved? And if so had the City Council concurred? If they had they shouldn't have and if they hadn't they should. There was no answer and, accordingly, recourse was made to Parliament.

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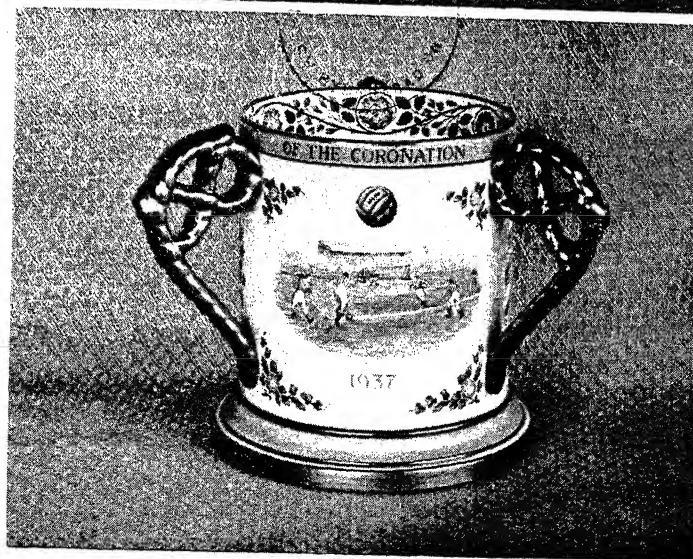
(Mr Speaker had, I remember, some difficult off-side problems.)

It is easier to uncover scandal than to cover it up again and this subject grew and grew until it reached that wasteland of Irish dialectic where discontent companions comedy to the enrichment of native drama and to the probable tune of *Dolly's Brae*.

There was another referee who lately monopolized the headlines. This time a German. Somewhere in Wurtemberg tempers were frayed and the referee, falling back on the extreme penalty, sent a full-back from the field of play. A well-bred player never needs to be sent from the field; therefore it is improper to add insult to insult by protesting that this full-back was no gentleman. But as he passed the referee he blasphemed 'You North Korean!' As I say it is unfair to propose that one who is not a gentleman can be guilty of ungentlemanly conduct. But German logic is inexorable and the player was suspended for two weeks on those grounds.

I think the following passage is probably fictitious, for William Pickford, who sponsored it, was a referee. It will, none the less, give much pleasure to critical spectators who may care to memorize it and use it at discretion—if that is the right word.

Of all the blear-eyed nincompoops that ever appeared in spindle-shanks on the turf in the guise of a referee, the cachinatory cough-drop who attempted the job on Saturday was the worst we



'THE ART OF STOKE CITY



MURAL PAINTING AT 'THE PEACOCK,' ISLINGTON, BY COSMO CLARK, A.R.A., A.R.W.S.

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have ever seen. His asinine imbecility was only equalled by his mountebank costume, and his general appearance and get-up reminded one more of a baked frog than a man. No worse tub-thumping, pot-bellied, jerry-built jackass ever tried to perform as a referee. His lugubrious tenebrousness and his monotonous squeaking on the whistle were a trial to the soul. Encased in a dull psychological envelopment of weird chaotic misunderstandings of the rules, he gyrated in a ludicrously painful manner up and down the field, and his addle-headed, flat-chested, splay-footed, cross-eyed, unkempt, unshaven, bow-legged, humpbacked, lop-eared, scraggy, imbecile and idiotic decision when he ruled Jones' second goal off-side, filled the audience, players and spectators alike, with disgust.

What happens to referees in hotter climates I do not know, nor, I think, does anyone. (What may happen in a hot climate to certain referees I have heard foretold, but that is in the realm of wishful thought.) But photographs of stadiums in South American Republics where there appear to be preventive moats, concrete emplacements, barbed-wire barricades—*ad lib.*—suggest that the humorist of the nineties (a student of Jules Verne?) had some prevision. Hear him, and mark the date-line of his prophecy.

EXTRACT FROM THE RULES OF FOOTBALL, YEAR 1950

1 The field of play shall be surrounded on all sides by wire netting or iron bars of sufficient height

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and strength to prevent spectators encroaching on the field of play in order to argue with the referee.

2 All clubs affiliated to the F.A. shall be provided with the following:

- I A coat of bullet-proof armour, to be worn by the referee.
- II A clock which automatically takes the time off when a player is hurt, or when the referee is turning a man off the field.
- III A motor-car or flying machine, by which the referee may safely leave the ground after the game. (To be returned by the referee on the following Sunday.)
- IV A looking-glass, by means of which the referee may see behind him when he has awarded a penalty or free kick.

3 All persons, whether spectators or players, who are caught shooting at the referee are liable to be forcibly ejected from the ground.

4 Any person stoning the gatekeeper when there is no game and return of money has been refused renders himself or herself liable to be made a referee.

5 All clubs shall, before every game commences, insure the referee's life.

Until 1880 the referee did not, officially, exist. In that year his title was incorporated in the *Rules of Football*. But he was principally occupied in determining disputes between the two umpires, in

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time-keeping, and in keeping a record of the game. He was on the touchline, not within it. I seem to remember our schoolmasters formerly refereed according to this method of distant control; possibly a relic of older days, for the influence of schoolmasters on the art of football has been prodigious. Once upon a time, at Queen's Club, Captain Simpson refereed in even greater comfort—from within the pavilion.

But those days of free enterprise went for ever when in 1889 the referee was given superior powers—to award free kicks, to dismiss players from the field—and when in 1891 he was accommodated not on the touchline but on the field of play. The accession to power of the referee meant relegation for the umpires. Divested of former authority they went to the touchline and the staves with which formerly they had maintained order were transformed into more decorative features. Thus our flagging linesmen.

It will have been noted that in recent years the company of linesmen have appeared to hanker after ancient rights. For they have, on occasion, maintained their own theories as to right and wrong even against the referee. Sometimes I have longed for the enforcement of that clause in the Laws (VI. *Linesmen*) which states: 'In the event of undue interference or improper conduct by a Linesman the Referee shall dispense with his services and arrange for a substitute to be appointed.' To be fair such

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unworthiness has only occurred when but for the watchful flag we had a goal.

I take my next lead from an illustrious footballer who, in reference to the disastrous match against Spain in the World Cup series of 1950, hinted that the Italian referee on the occasion had independent ideas on 'interpretation'. Here I understand that the English spectator must know that no codification of rules can allow for every contingency and that final acceptance of the referee's authority is the fundamental law of spectatorship. This is not an intention to restrict the free right of criticism from the terraces, but a hint that proper feeling for the game knows the proper period to criticism.

If now I may be so bold as to address the referee I would urge the virtues of quiet control. The less pother created by the referee the greater his popularity and the readiness with which his decisions are accepted.

The art of refereeing is much the same as the sister art—which has grown to maturity during the same period—of orchestral conducting. For the referee maintains the flow, continuity, and phrasing of football. I might have known that Mr Ellis who directed the classic fantasia *Wolves and Spurs at White Hart Lane*, was a Yorkshireman; from all accounts his shaping of the movements, his exquisite appreciation of nuance, his precision, his economy of gesture was directly derived from the Huddersfield Choral Society. Sargent, perhaps, would have

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done it this way. But not Beecham. Beecham, one feels, would have manipulated affairs to the exclusion of full-backs and to the greater advantage of speed on the wings.

I have known a conductor call a halt in choral rehearsal by rattling keys. I must try a whistle. Which would suit Strauss or Tchaikowsky, and with a couple of linesmen to manage the reckless brass and percussion.

Demonstrative conductors and demonstrative referees are, however, anathema. Let no referee come near me who flings his arms to the heavens in impious gesticulation, who stalks from players in debate to the linesman and back again, who digs an angry heel into our sacred turf, who censors the merest playfulness and lets pass positive danger. Let him also stay away who practises essay writing. I have no objection to the referee turning author (indeed Mr Pickford, who wrote the *Referee's Chart* of 1893 on which all modern practice is founded, was editor of the *Bournemouth Guardian*); but not during play, I, like you, have seen them holding up play, which has already been held up, to compose some telling paragraph, or perhaps a set of hexameters, to enshrine for posterity a moment's offence.

On the other hand I knew a man—not very well—who disappeared on Saturday afternoons. Not for a long time did I discover where he went and what he did. Winter after winter, foul weather or fair,

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he fulfilled his weekly pledge to control some extremely minor, boyish game. There is indication of the debt we owe to our referee—

The Arbiter of others' fate
But, you may add,

A Suppliant for his own!

CRITICS, AND ARMCHAIRS

THE DELPHIC ORACLE went out of service too soon, for at no time has the gift of prophecy and the art of soothsaying been so important as at this moment.

Will Halifax beat Gateshead at Gateshead? Logic says no. What about Dumbarton and Queen of the South? Probably a draw. And Cardiff and Coventry? Also a draw. Partick Thistle and Raith Rovers? Home win. But can you be certain? Certainly not. Then I saw what was happening. My interlocutor was not testing my knowledge of current affairs for the sake of knowledge. He was not inclined to digression on the architecture of Halifax nor the civic amenities of Gateshead. He did not know where Dumbarton was. On Queen of the South he was testy. What did it matter who she was?

I thought I might help in respect of Raith Rovers for I have a correspondent there who had just written gloomily 'Spell them Wraith Rovers.' What the hell! Do you think I'm a ruddy poet? No, said I,

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you haven't enough sense for that. What are you anyway? A practical man. And—nastily—I have to work for my living.

But intuition set in and geniality expanded—home, draw, away; home, draw, away; draw, draw, draw. . . . That'll do. Off went five shillings towards the upkeep of the Hyde Park mansion of another practical man. But the second is more practical than the first: he understands the desirability of parting fools and money.

I have strong views on gambling. For six years I took part in an annual sweepstake. The subject of the sweepstake was a sermon and so far as I know the probable length of this anciently instituted monologue had stimulated the cupidity of indigent schoolboys for three hundred years. But for three hundred years generations of schoolboys (many of whom became bishops) had listened to sermons and, doubtless, taken note of their varied exhortations and comminations.

But to meet a man who will risk five shillings on Everton without knowing that Everton is the noblest institution in Liverpool is to bring one to the saddest of conclusions regarding human nature. Do you, I said, go to football matches? I knew the answer. He hadn't time to waste: anyway he didn't like those who did go. I hate him.

That instance is one of too many. But the parasites must feed. And this is when I regret the passing of the Delphic oracle for its answers, if ambiguous,

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were stimulating. Whereas now we only discover the palpable sterility of this:

Spades v Clubs: *Spades* have had a bad run lately with 2 points from 4 matches, whereas *Clubs*, after a shaky start, have made steady headway. Take no notice of their 9-0 defeat last week for they were right out of form. Boodle, the *Spades* right-back, has a strained Achilles tendon. It will be risky to play him, but the question is can he be left out? Against this set *Clubs*' misfortune in Stickleback's refusal to come to terms. This is a good draw. If in doubt put home win, though the possibility of a surprise cannot be ruled out. Therefore don't hesitate to put an away win.

One evening in London I bought an evening paper. I cut out the forecasts of Saturday's matches. Then came Saturday and I checked the pundits: in two cases out of three they were miserably wrong. Experts, my foot! This aspect of football appreciation is depressing for it infects not only journalism but also those spectators whose inclination is towards an unearned fortune rather than to an afternoon's pleasure. Spectator, if you must pit yourself against the weight of cold statistics leave the match which you watch uncontaminated by greedy speculation. Again, if you persist, ignore the critics and depend on your own judgement.

For there is no criticism of football so powerful, so informed, so colourful as that of the regular spectator.

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I went down to town on Boxing Day. A quarter of an hour on the top of the bus.

'A poor game yesterday.' This from a Buffs' supporter.

'Now, don't be daft,' from a gentle-minded Blue. 'Why,' he took his cue from the provocative silence, 'there hasn't been football like that since, let me see. . . . When was it, Bert, that Sam Fryer went to Oldham?'

'Nineteen twenty-three,' from Bert.

'Now that was a team,' Bert continued, emboldened by the success of his fortuitous jab at the encyclopædia of uncertain reminiscence. 'I remember on Christmas Day that year how Blues scored 3 goals in the first ten minutes and then Albert Small miskicked and let in Nipper Smith. . . .'

'Th' best player yesterday was Alf Ashtead.'

'Ay, he loves football, *and* he's a gentleman.'

'They say he won't go to Manchester.'

'No, his uncle is the wife's cousin and he says as how Alf's young lady, that is Joe Snaith's niece, who used to play for the "United"—Joe Snaith—I mean—as how Alf's young lady won't let him go. He's better off anyway—steady job at the works and five pound a week from Blues.'

'They say that Bert Jenks wants to come back from Alloa.'

'His wife doesna' like Scotland.'

'They never ought to have let him go. . . .'

Terminus.

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But what joy in all this leisured folk lore. Football, its traditions, its legends, its personalities. The past, the present, the future, wrapped not within the close confines of a single day's incidents but within the whole history of our community. There is nothing that is negligible here. To note what is what is to obtain the passport to universal friendship.

I wonder, recalling our amateur commentators, whether our sports writers are not too inclined to forget their vocation. Do they not, in general, keep too close to the streamline?

Blacks started briskly and swept upfield. Snooks slipped past Brown and crossed a peach, but Egg failed to connect. *Whites* retaliated but a good movement came to nothing when Bacon was found off-side. *Blacks* resumed the offensive and danger threatened from the left, but a scorcher from Pigg was scrambled away for an abortive corner. The teams turned round with no score. Within five minutes *Whites* went ahead. A quick switch by Bacon found the defence on the wrong foot and Blot slipped an easy one home. Two minutes later in a *Black* attack Snooks was injured. Undismayed *Blacks* pressed and Egg headed past the custodian. The pivot then hit bar and rigging in quick succession, but it was not until the 89th minute that *Blacks* made sure of two points. Poots middled and Egg did the rest.

Where, in all this symbolic welter, is the symbol? The match has been played without a ball¹⁴.

¹⁴ Although the above account is not quite actual I checked my evidence and re-read the accounts of three matches which, apparently, had no ball.

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No, give me more of the romantic, for as a spectator I have no love for any other form of literature. Let me lie back and study Old International in the *Manchester Guardian* and discover from him what is Lancashire. And let me see the coloured pattern of play in the imagination as I dream, influenzal, over the fire. Let me force truth away and protest that the victory of Charlton over Huddersfield, which I did not see, was a hollow mockery. Let me dispute off-sides five hundred miles away. Let me choose teams for England, Ireland, Scotland, and Wales.

Leave me free on Saturday to see or to hear a match; to hold inquests on Sunday, which must be adjourned till Monday brings Monday's evidence; to gossip about the town on Tuesday and to check points of view at the club; to have exclusive information from the inner circle on Wednesday concerning X's relegation to the reserves and the progress of Y's injuries; to come back to more general news from far and near in Thursday's papers and the evening broadcasts; to collate Friday's probabilities in team selection; and again on Saturday to live a private life, unburdened by cares of office and heedless of dismal clatter from political Cassandras, with those who think with me that football is, in truth, a most contagious game.

ANSWERS FOR THE CURIOUS

- p. 14 1930.
- p. 18 Nelson.
- p. 31 Irish, 1947-48.
- p. 50 Athenian, Isthmian, Corinthian and Spartan
- p. 53 Smith.

